

**DOWNTOWN URBAN CENTER  
MASTER PLAN  
for the  
CITY OF LEWISTON, MAINE**

**July 20, 1999**

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**Prepared for**

**The Mayor's Downtown Renaissance Task Force  
The City of Lewiston  
Lewiston, Maine 04240**

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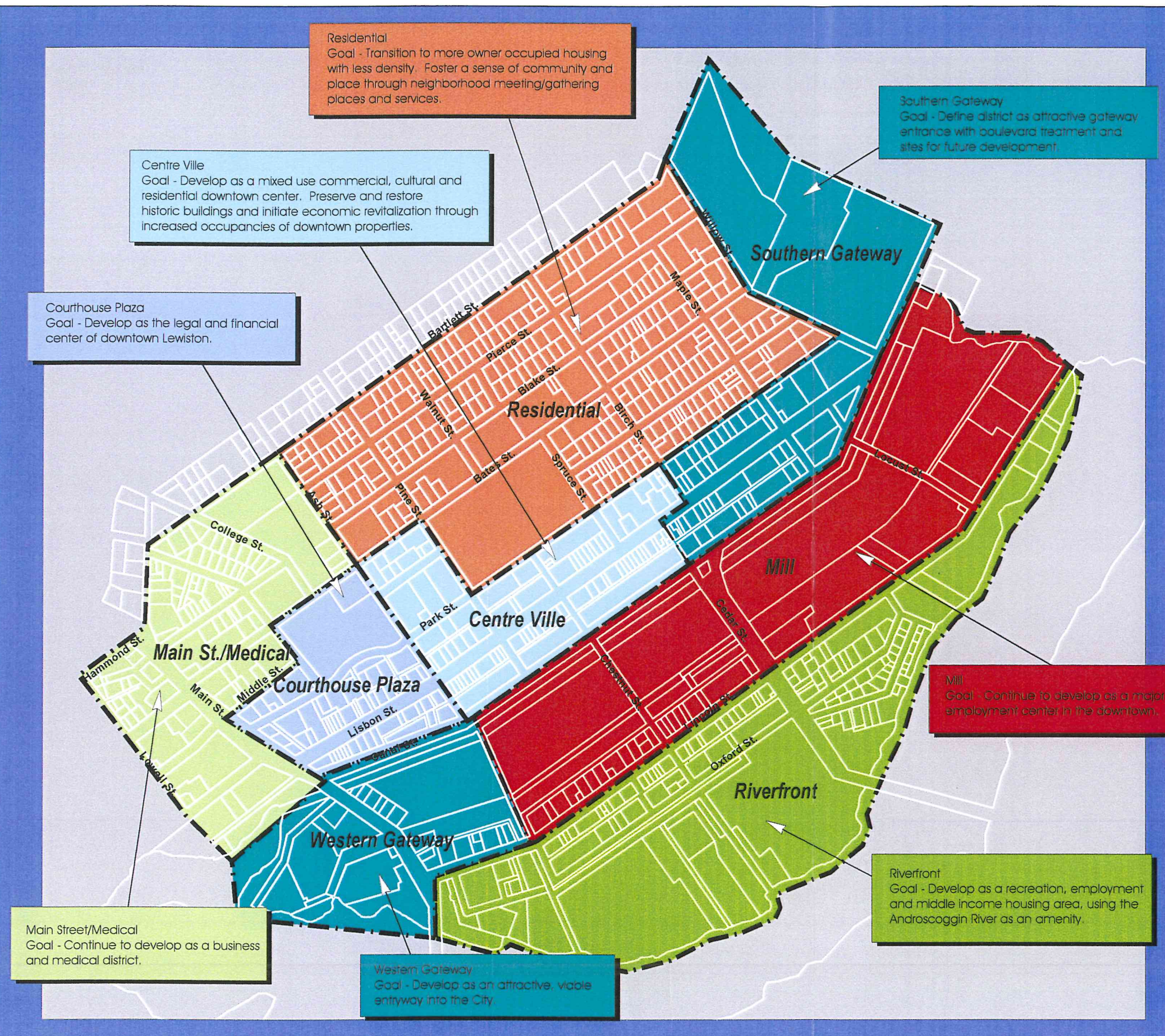
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# URBAN CENTER MASTER PLAN

## LEWISTON, MAINE



Prepared by  
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DURHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
July 1999



**Lewiston, Maine - The Challenges**

- Poor private sector investment climate, as evidenced by low property values, low commercial rents and a general lack of broker and investor activity throughout the downtown, despite the availability of numerous properties.
- Excess inventory of buildings, many of which are blighted and poorly maintained, including functionally and economically obsolete housing and commercial properties. Furthermore, “newly” vacant properties, such as St. Dom’s and St. Peter’s school(s), continue to be added to the inventory.
- Limited activity in arts, cultural and recreational amenities which are an integral part of revitalized downtowns throughout New England.
- Lack of a critical mass of retailing and service sector activity in the downtown and limited presence of a theme or “niche” which differentiates and promotes Lewiston relative to other Maine communities.
- Incompatible uses along Lisbon Street brought about by the presence of truck traffic, combined with a lack of open space and design standards which bind the street as a whole.
- Inadequate parking for future, planned economic/commercial activity and poor linkages between the residential, employment, commerce and recreational centers of the downtown.
- Limited home ownership and mixed use, mixed income residential opportunities in the downtown.
- Poor self esteem in some sectors of the community which has fostered a “can’t do” attitude which has often become self defining/defeating.
- Finite City capacity to finance new projects which necessitates the need for private sector involvement and civic involvement in downtown revitalization.
- A need to approach development of downtown Lewiston in a manner which is cooperative and compatible with existing and planned development in downtown Auburn.

**Lewiston, Maine - The Goals**

- Goal 1:** *To stimulate vital and new business investment in the downtown in order to maintain and improve real estate values, occupancy levels, employment opportunities and consumer activity.*
- Goal 2:** *To enhance the open/green space in downtown by creating gateways, pedestrian corridors/pocket parks, improved linkages and density reductions via aggressive inventory demolitions.*
- Goal 3:** *To encourage the adaptive, mixed reuse of downtown properties including commercial opportunities for the mill buildings and residential opportunities for owner occupied housing.*
- Goal 4:** *To promote and realize a downtown which is cleaner, friendlier and safer.*
- Goal 5:** *To undertake a design process for downtown which develops public space.*
- Goal 6:** *To enhance the aesthetic quality of Lewiston through: the expansion of arts/cultural amenities; use of the canal system, the Androscoggin River/riverfront; and, the preservation, restoration, rehabilitation and where appropriate relocation of historic buildings.*
- Goal 7:** *To improve the vehicular access to and through downtown via traffic management, rerouting (where practical and feasible) and improved parking capacities at a scale which also serves the pedestrian and enhances the urban landscape.*
- Goal 8:** *To integrate Bates College, L/A College, Central Maine Technical College, Mid-State College, Husson College, St. Mary's Hospital, CMMC and other area businesses and employers more fully into the downtown community.*
- Goal 9:** *To establish an organizational and procedural process which ensures that this Master Plan is enacted and is systematically and routinely monitored to measure progress, review accountability and promote success.*
- Goal 10:** *To keep civic, office, government functions, as well as state and federal activities, in downtown Lewiston.*
- Goal 11:** *To conduct the development of downtown Lewiston, especially along the riverfront area, in a manner which is consistent with the initiatives in Auburn.*

Lewiston, Maine - Recommended Actions

Organization

- Identify a senior level Project Manager responsible for implementation, day to day management and overall coordination of the Downtown Urban Center Master Plan.
- Continue the Mayor’s Downtown Renaissance Task Force as the overseer of this Master Plan and helping to ensure implementation.
- Explore the feasibility of broadening the scope of services of the Lewiston Housing Authority to include involvement in certain portions of the redevelopment efforts in the downtown.
- Incorporate this Downtown Urban Center Master Plan as an amendment to the City of Lewiston’s Comprehensive Plan.
- Utilize local resources such as L/A Arts, L/A Economic Growth Council, Bates College, L/A College, Mid-State College, Central Maine Technical College, Husson College, St. Mary’s Hospital, CMMC, Chamber of Commerce, interested citizen(s) and local organizations for expertise and in-kind services.
- Expand the usage of civic organizations to help implement key elements of the Master Plan.

Marketing

- Stimulate the market/broker function downtown with the objective of securing new owners and tenants. An incentive package will be required.
- Develop marketing/promotional efforts for all of downtown, treating it as a single retail/shopping/employment/banking district.
- Communicate successes from this project, and any related downtown activities, with area banks and real estate brokers/developers.
- Sell existing, idle City owned properties to developers to help stimulate new investment.

Acquisitions & Demolitions

- Demolish vacant, blighted properties within each district in the downtown.
- Initiate a partnership between the City and downtown property owners to acquire and develop parcels adjacent to their business.
- Complete site acquisition as required to develop the Courthouse Plaza and associated parking and public space/amenities.
- Consider acquisition of the Libbey Mill site and adjacent properties for redevelopment.
- Consider acquisition of the block bounded by Birch, Park, Maple, Lisbon Street(s) and the possible redevelopment in conjunction with the bakery.
- Consider acquisition of key properties in the Southern gateway for either future office park or State/Federal government uses.



Lewiston, Maine - Recommended Actions

Parking & Traffic

- Improve traffic circulation throughout the downtown via selective reorientation (if practical/feasible).
- Develop parking facilities which service the mill area and downtown businesses/residents, as well as a daytime and evening consumer.
- Consider use of a trolley system, where appropriate, to move people from parking areas to commercial core of downtown. This may be less expensive than other options.

Zoning & Land Use

- Review the City of Lewiston zoning ordinance and make appropriate changes to facilitate a streamlined regulatory, development and site review process. Consider implementing a zoning overlay district which could provide development incentives and further expedite the development process.
- Implement zoning changes to allow for bigger, buildable lots, with less density for residential uses.
- Encourage residential conversion and development within the downtown. Seek to provide greater opportunities for owner occupied housing, shared off street parking and expansive yards where feasible.
- Consider waving the parking requirements for downtown properties.

Pedestrian, Public Amenities & Urban Design Issues

- Utilize the waterfront, Railroad Park and other selected locations to attract additional businesses, cultural/arts activities and events and residential opportunities to the downtown.
- Create pedestrian connectors from Courthouse Plaza, Centre Ville parking to the Bates Mill complex.
- Develop pocket parks throughout the downtown.
- Improve overall streetscape, blending lower and upper Lisbon Street with lighting and landscaping.
- Gradually restore the historic district theme along Lisbon Street.
- Upgrade the major gateways into the downtown with landscaping, period lighting and selected demolition.
- Develop design guidelines for new parking garages and parking lots.

Recreational & Cultural

- Capitalize on the canal system and the Androscoggin River with a river walk and related activities.
- Expand the recreational and cultural programming in the City.
- Consider the development of a Franco-American business corridor in Centre Ville to tie into the City’s heritage.

Finance

- Establish a low interest loan pool among area banks and other interested entities, targeted to the downtown. Also, expand and enhance existing programs.
- Establish a matching grant program for downtown properties, possibly with CDBG funds or empowerment zone funding.
- Utilize the Mayor’s Downtown Renaissance Task Force, in conjunction with an independently contracted architect, to serve as an oversight/review committee for these funds and projects.
- Seek special State legislation for financing cultural projects.